



**The Honorable André Carson (IN-07)**  
Statement in Support of Carson Amendment #579  
H.R. 6395, National Defense Authorization Act for FY2021  
July 20, 2020

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDDA) and my amendment which authorizes five million dollars for a pancreatic cancer early detection initiative (EDI) at the Department of Defense (DoD). Pancreatic cancer has the lowest survival rate of all major cancers – in large part due to lack of research in early detection. I believe we all agree that the patients, families, friends, and loved ones suffering from this disease deserve greater support.

My amendment will provide critical funding needed for more research and an early detection initiative (EDI) under the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) at DoD. I am pleased that the Appropriations Defense Subcommittee has already appropriated ten million dollars for general pancreatic cancer research funding in this year's funding legislation. This is an increase of four million dollars from the previous year, and I am thankful to the Defense Subcommittee, especially Chairman Visclosky, for their leadership on this issue. While encouraging, this general research increase is not enough to close the gap in early detection of pancreatic cancer. We should do more, especially now.

On Friday, this issue hit painfully close to home as America lost a giant to pancreatic cancer. Rep. John Lewis, our civil rights hero and Conscience of the Congress, passed away from pancreatic cancer only seven months after receiving his diagnosis. My amendment is inspired by Rep. Lewis' courageous fight against pancreatic cancer. It is unacceptable that, despite being the third leading cause of cancer-related death in our country, pancreatic cancer still does not have a dedicated early detection initiative. Rep. Lewis' short battle against pancreatic cancer is, sadly, often the norm for patients. In fact, the lack of research in ways to detect pancreatic cancer early has led to devastating consequences: sixty-six percent of patients live less than one year following their diagnosis. I am also inspired by my friend and colleague, Rep. Alcee Hastings, who is fighting pancreatic cancer.

If diagnosed early, the five-year survival rate for pancreatic cancer patients is above eighty percent. However, if pancreatic cancer is detected late, the five-year survival rate drops to less than five percent. By failing to support our nation's researchers with the means to find new ways to detect pancreatic cancer early, we are leaving America's pancreatic cancer patients with few ways to detect this disease in time to extend the quality and duration of their lives. Rep. Lewis' struggle against this horrific disease should serve as a sobering reminder of the human cost of failing to support early detection for pancreatic cancer.

It's important to note that persistent health care inequities and disparities for communities of color compound the devastation of pancreatic cancer and the effects of lack of early detection research. Unfortunately, Blacks are more likely than their fellow Americans to get pancreatic cancer. In fact, the incidence rate for pancreatic cancer among Black Americans is twenty percent higher than any other racial demographic. This disease is more deadly for us: the

pancreatic cancer death rate is seventeen percent higher for Black men than white men. Significant evidence demonstrates that these disproportionate levels of pancreatic cancer are in large part rooted in disparities in health care and access to tests and diagnostics. As a result, the lack of pancreatic cancer early detection research accelerates the racial unfairness in our health care system, with devastating consequences for minorities.

At a time when our country is having a national conversation about the deep disparities in access to health care for Black and Brown people during a global pandemic, Congress must do everything within our power to improve health outcomes through research and treatment. Providing dedicated funding for early detection research at DoD will help fill a critical gap in our pancreatic cancer research and will help address the pancreatic cancer disparities for communities of color.

I urge the House to support this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.